

The proudest voices of recovery belong to the people who live it every day and the people who support them. These inspirational Americans are at the heart of this year's **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** theme, **"Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Health."** Each day these individuals find strength in the positive way they have reclaimed their lives, and in the positive messages they deliver to others. Read on for their unique stories. Share these experiences with others who are on the road to recovery, and encourage them to share their success stories as well. Your encouragement can empower them to raise their own voices and inspire even more people to celebrate health and recovery.



"I am a grateful recovering alcoholic, and every day I do healthy, positive things so I won't take another drink. My own experience has led me to work to combat the number one public health issue facing our country: chemical addiction. Expanding access to treatment is a matter of life and death for 26 million Americans."

— **Jim Ramstad**, U.S. House of Representatives, Minnesota's 3rd District

"I am a public advocate because a CEO of a very large educational organization withdrew the offer of employment after we talked about my recovery. I'll never forget the moment he said, 'How could you ever begin to think we would want someone like you to represent us?'"

— **Susan Rook**, Director, Communications and Outreach, Faces and Voices of Recovery



"We've had people with breast cancer and no one would ever suggest to us, while they're going through chemo, 'You should just get rid of them.' To say that about alcoholism or an abuse situation makes no sense to us. We can be a voice in the community and say, 'It's time to step up to the plate and do something.'"

— **Diane Crookham-Johnson**, Vice President of Administration, Musco Lighting



"Father Vaughan Quinn, who ran the Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center in Detroit, and I talked for three hours. The conversation was frank. I put my life on the table. All the loneliness, the depression, the anger, frustration with people and jobs, thoughts of suicide and fears. Quinn listened to all of it without interruption. Finally it was his turn. There was no hesitation. He said it quietly but forcefully: 'The problem in your life is alcohol.' He was right. Father Quinn [then] told me about a group of non-drinking alcoholic friends he wanted me to meet. They were the ones who helped me quit drinking. I couldn't do it on my own."

From "The Courage to Change: Personal Conversations About Alcoholism" by Dennis Wholey

— **Dennis Wholey**, TV interviewer, Host of "This is America!"



"I used to be terrified of passing through the beer and wine aisle to get to the milk section of the supermarket. I'm an alcoholic and a drug addict, you see. My addiction also came with a criminal record. I had gone from a comfortable life in New England to a Federal prison in West Virginia for conspiracy to import cocaine. I got out, discovered crack, and continued my downward spiral. Eventually, through the support of friends, family, and others suffering with addiction, I was able to get clean. But I still had this nagging shame.

Then, about eight years into my recovery, I decided to produce an autobiographical documentary about my recovery process. It aired in early 2002 on ABC's "Nightline." Addiction is a serious problem that we live with amid temptation every day. But I have found that my management and openness about it is a source of pride. And that takes the fear out of getting milk every week."

— **Peter Nicks**, Producer/Director

"I got kicked out of pharmacy school twice due to a full-blown cocaine addiction—the school [called it] 'academic difficulty.' I call it the conspiracy of silence. People don't know where to turn when [addiction] happens. There isn't a lot of discussion about what to do and where to go."

— **David Marley**, Executive Director of the NC Pharmacists Recovery Network





"I never felt comfortable in my own skin. I only felt lovable when I excelled at school or sports. By the time I was 12, I was drinking and smoking pot every day. I progressed to cocaine and heroin. By 15, I knew I used differently than others; ashamed, I knew I was an addict. At 29, my sister and my employer intervened. Already demoralized, it wasn't a struggle to get me to an inpatient residential treatment center. My insurance did not cover my treatment. I am grateful that I had loved ones who could. I stayed clean

for six years. My relationships with my family, my employer and my past were healed. I made new friends who were living a recovery lifestyle, and I became a vice president of a lobbying firm in Washington, DC. My life was flourishing, except in the area of intimate relationships. After a particularly painful breakup, I relapsed and went back to treatment. I've been clean five years, am happily married, and have helped found a new government relations firm in Washington, DC—one of the few focusing on addiction and recovery issues. I am grateful that I had two shots at treatment and that my relapse gave me the gift of learning to be vigilant about protecting and sustaining my recovery."

— **Carol McDaid**, *Principal, Capitol Decisions*

"When I was 12, I experimented with inhalants for the first time. A year later, I was smoking marijuana on a regular basis. Over the next four years I abused even more serious drugs. I depended on them to make it through the day, but didn't have the power to stop. I feared I would never get clean if I didn't get help from my parents and a residential treatment program. My parents sent me to the Caron Foundation. I went through the four-week primary care program and, luckily, the six-week extended care program. I say 'luckily' because my parents' insurance company only covered my first 19 days. But if I had gone home then, I would've never stayed clean. The Caron Foundation let me stay free for 10 days while my parents gathered money from my family. After treatment, I returned to society and changed my lifestyle. I started hanging out with people who were better for me, and going to places that would not harm my recovery. I will be celebrating five years clean and sober in March 2003, and I owe it all to God and the Caron Foundation. Treatment works and saves lives."



— **Tim Bradley**, *Uturn Director/Founder*



"My last day [using], I worked 12 hours and came home to cops opening the door for me. I was taken to jail. I cried for days and days, [and] admitted that I was an addict. [The judge] said his conscience would not allow him to find me guilty. Today, I work for alcohol and drug services in the jail. I was destined to be there. Today, I give back."

— **Shireda Prince**, *President, Substance Abuse Addiction and Recovery Alliance of Northern Virginia*

"I have been public about my addiction and recovery for almost a year. I'm still amazed by the reaction. Often the response is shock and bewilderment. These reactions result from society's stereotype of alcoholics and addicts, but I am neither a 'drunk on the corner,' nor a social or academic failure. I have dreams for the future."

— **Molly Potter**, *Student*



"My son is five years old. A couple of months ago, some friends were over and I had a [soda] can in my hand. One of my friends said to my son, 'Look, your dad has a beer in his hand.' And my five-year-old said, 'No, my dad doesn't drink. He teaches people not to.' I've had three car crashes and by the grace of God, I never ran into anybody. I got four DUIs in about four years. The end result was a Class D felony that resulted in a five-year prison sentence. The lawyer worked out a deal to get me into treatment in the department of corrections. Now I'm

in a master's program in clinical psychology, and things are unbelievable. I can't even tell you how I got here or how this is happening. [I went] from a scared, shamed, beat-down little boy to a flourishing adult, and all because of recovery."

— **Darrell Williams**, *Prevention Specialist*



"I'd been a heroin addict for years. My first days of awakening were walking into a faith-based community organization [Teen Challenge International]. I graduated in 1974. [Since then,] I've walked the excellence that I know is there to be walked. The man I've been now for 29 years is who I am."

— **Henry Lozano**, *White House Advisor on Substance Abuse and Addiction*

"I was 18 years old when I hit bottom. I [was] on the run from [drug dealers], on the run from the police, and on the run to get high. The only person I could turn to was my probation officer. He took me to a treatment center and since that day I've been clean. I was that kid that everybody said wouldn't live to see age 21. I was the kid that society had practically given up on, but the recovery community embraced me. I went back to school, got my bachelor's, my master's, and I'm planning to start a Ph.D. program. The freedom that staying clean has given me [has] allowed me to travel, meet people, and go places. It's just a beautiful feeling. That's enough to keep me on this road of recovery."

— **Andre Johnson**, *Project Officer, Partnership for Drug-Free Detroit*



"I was over 40 years old when I first got out of treatment and had control of my life. I went from riding a city bus and walking the streets to having two vehicles, a camper and a Harley. It is amazing. I have a relationship with my daughter. She hadn't acknowledged that I was her father since she was 11. But we have a real close relationship now. For her to give me a hug, tell me she loves me, and call me 'Dad' means a lot. When I went through treatment, I was an older person. Kids, when they go through it, have to give

up people they have grown up with and people they still go to school with. That has got to be extremely hard. But recovery works if you work at it. The main thing is the desire. If you have the desire and the willpower, you can do it. I've been in solid recovery for about four years."

— **Dwight Johnson**, *Truck Driver*



"I got into cocaine and acid by the time I was in high school, and I smoked a quarter ounce of pot a day. I got into a lot of illegal activities. I graduated, got introduced to crystal methamphetamine, [and] within two years was incarcerated. I was in prison for a year-and-a-half, got out, continued with my criminal lifestyle, [and] was again sent to prison, sentenced to serve four years. On Christmas, 1997, a man in his sixties asked me for a cigarette.

I realized that if I continued the life I was living, I would end up old, alone and incarcerated for the rest of my life. From that day on, I stayed clean and sober. I got released from prison on September 1, 1999, [and] am now involved in a lot of positive things. My friends and I formed a group called Wai'anae Men in Recovery. We dedicate our time to sharing our experiences with drugs and crimes and the pain and consequences. I am proud that I have friends that care for me. I would not be able to do this alone. It is only through God and the people in my life that I look forward to experiencing the fruits of life."

— **Willie Leong**, *Assistant Chef/Su Chef*

"I am a recovering alcoholic and drug addict. I am also quadriplegic. When I wanted treatment, I called 32 treatment programs. Not one could handle my personal care needs. Through an anonymous recovery program, a great sponsor, and good friends, I'm now in recovery. But I had no help from the county or state. The Americans with Disabilities Act is over 11 years old, but there's virtually no compliance with this law when it comes to treatment. Clearly, people with disabilities need access to high-quality drug and alcohol treatment, just like everyone else."



— **Steven A. Towle**, *Washington Liaison, National Association on Alcohol, Drugs and Disability, Inc.*

"Alcoholism has affected my life in many ways. I grew up with two active alcoholics. I married and divorced an unrecovered ACOA (Adult Child of an Alcoholic). I remarried, this time to a now-recovering alcoholic. I was challenged to focus on recovery, and break the cycle for my children, my grandchildren, and myself. In doing so, I contributed to my dear husband's recovery in a significant way. I have been to private counseling, attended and facilitated ACOA groups, participated in an in-depth 12-step program for ACOAs, and now volunteer as a facilitator for a family member program offered by a local treatment center. My daughters have benefited from this program, and I believe in my heart that due to their knowledge and our now healthy home environment, they will not continue the cycle. I truly believe in the power of recovery programs for all family members—for their own healing and growth, as well as a powerful aid for the recovering addict in their lives."



—**Kathryn Fitzpatrick**, *Information Technology Executive*



"Alcoholism is a painful disease for those who have it, as well as those who love them. As I learned about it through a children's support group program offered by a local treatment center, I discovered it is a disease—but one for which recovery is possible, although it is very tough. It requires all the energy and effort the person has. I have watched how it affected my mom. She had a very tough upbringing with both parents being alcoholics, then marrying an alcoholic. But instead of having a negative outlook, my mom found strength and continued to focus on her recovery from being the child of alcoholics. I look up to no one more than my mom and stepdad. They have been able to provide a healthy and happy environment for our family, and I know I will do the same for my own family in the future."

—**Tahra Luther**, *Student*



"I was using marijuana before I was out of elementary school. By 19, I started getting into heavier drugs like heroin and cocaine. When I was 25, my son came up to me and said, 'You know Dad, I'm almost five years old.' I looked at him and it hit me: I don't even know this boy. It broke my heart, and I thought about committing suicide. My grandma's teachings saved me because I didn't think I'd be going to heaven if I did. That night, I went to a meeting for the first time. That was the start of a rocky recovery. I was still working in

the oil fields, which didn't promote my recovery. So I resigned and started working as a janitor and, later, as a night monitor in a treatment center. After awhile I started working with clients. I enjoyed this work and felt I had a lot to offer since I had been there myself. Within a year, I was a substance abuse counselor. But soon after, I relapsed. Fortunately, my boss didn't give up on me. Instead, he said, 'Victor, I don't need you to quit. I need you to straighten up and get back to work.' That is what I did. Since then, I have been sober for over 14 years and have won the 2001 Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leadership Award. The award was given to me for developing a unique substance abuse treatment program that serves Alaskan Native Families who live in rural Alaskan areas only accessible by plane, boat, or snowmachine. But the best award I've received is my sobriety. For that I need to thank the Lord and the clients I have worked with over the years. The old saying is very true: When you help someone it helps you. I'm not a saint. I just think I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. This is my path."

— **Victor Joseph**, Director, Old Minto Family Recovery Camp Program, Tanana Chiefs Conference